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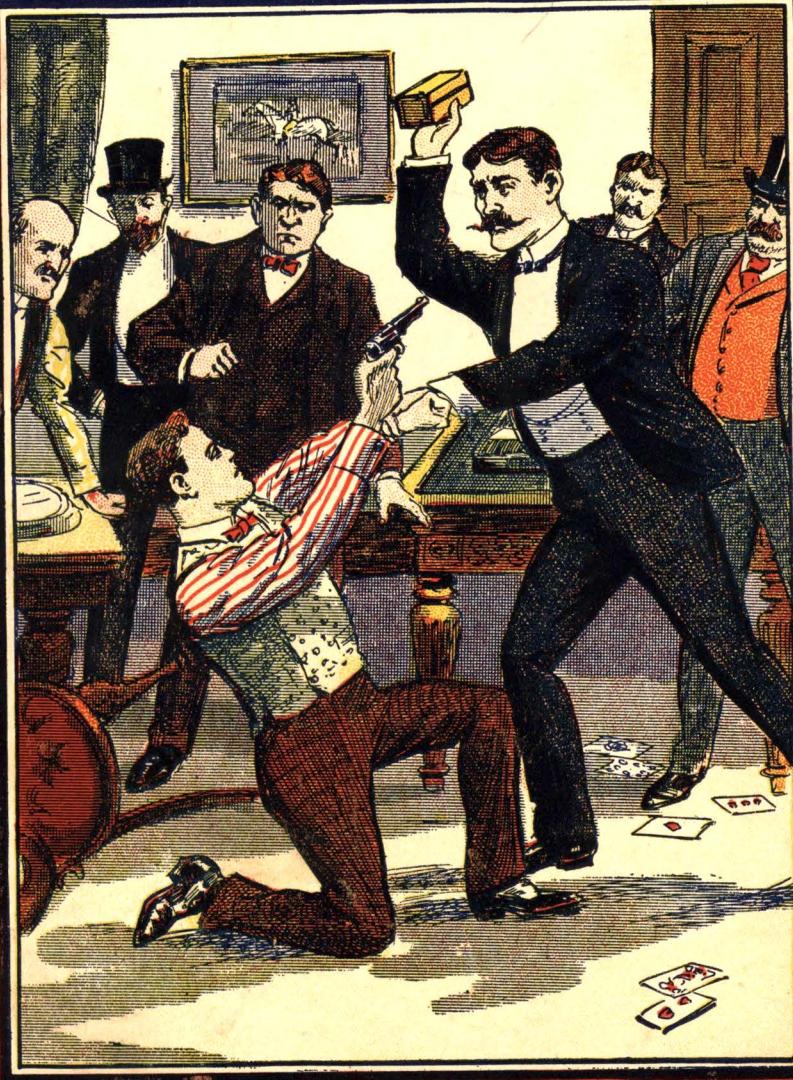
# SHIELD WEEKLY

TRUE STORIES FROM THE NOTE-BOOKS OF  
FAMOUS CHIEFS OF POLICE



## KIT KEEN, THE CROOK CATCHER or The King of the Kidnappers

BY ALDEN F. BRADSHAW



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## TRUE DETECTIVE STORIES • STRANGER THAN FICTION

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# Kit Keen, the Crook Catcher; OR, THE KING OF THE KIDNAPPERS.

By ALDEN F. BRADSHAW

## CHAPTER I.

### THE BOY RESCUER.

"Help! help! help!"

The cry rang through the still night air like the notes of a bugle.

It came from the lips of a young girl, for the electric light fell full upon her face as she broke away from the grasp of two well-dressed men who had just lifted her from a covered buggy which had drawn up alongside of the curb before a block of brick houses all strangely alike.

Save for the one electric light the street was dark, deserted, with no one near, apparently, to hear that cry for help.

After that appeal had come three times from frightened lips it was smothered by a rude hand being thrust over the mouth,

while the men hastened with their half-fainting burden toward the cellar entrance to the house nearest to them.

But the cry had not been in vain.

One person back in the shadow and passing along the street had heard it.

He had heeded it, too, not counting the odds against him.

That person was a young man.

The electric light revealed that much.

He carried a satchel in his hand and he acted with a promptness that showed that he had his wits about him, his nerves in perfect control.

The satchel swished through the air and was brought down with telling force upon the head of the nearest man.

He had lost his hat; the satchel was heavy and fell hard on a defenseless head.

Down fell the man, and he was out of the game.

But the second man released the girl to grapple with the plucky fighter.

And the man had a pistol in his hand.

The young man grasped the weapon, the two grappled, swung to and fro and fell.

In the fall the youngster was on top, there was a smothered report of a pistol, a cry of pain and horror and the man lay motionless.

The young man sprung to his feet and faced the girl.

She had picked up his satchel, and now, as voices were heard, windows were thrown up and the call of a policeman was heard in the distance, she cried, piteously:

"Oh, do not leave me here to be found out. Quick! Take me away, I beg of you!"

There stood the horse and buggy, for the animal had not moved at the shot.

Her rescuer hesitated only a second.

Then he said:

"Quick! get in, miss."

She sprang into the buggy, he after her, and seizing the reins he sent the horse flying along, leaving all pursuit behind.

By rapid driving, and turning from street to street, as though he knew the city perfectly, they eluded any pursuers that might be on the track and continued on for a quarter of an hour.

"Where do you wish to go, miss?"

"I live on Michigan avenue above Fortieth street, but do not drive near the house, please," and her companion noticed that the girl was trembling from fright.

"I shall desert this rig, miss, for I do not wish to be caught with it."

"No, no, and not for the world would I wish to be found out, for I would have to appear in court and I believe it would kill me. You will not tell on me, will you?"

"Not knowing who to tell on, I guess not, miss; but why were you with those men?"

"They kidnapped me from my father's house, for my parents are away to-night, and I suppose they wished to get ransom money; but you saved me, and you seem to be but a boy."

"Only about sixteen."

"Yet you attacked those two horrible men. Did you kill them both?"

"One was killed, the other only knocked silly, I guess."

"And if you let them know who you are they will hang you for murder, won't they?"

"I guess not," was the decided reply, and the youngster drew up alongside of the pavement, helped the girl out, hitched the horse and, taking the satchel, said:

"The police will find the horse and take care of him, so now I will see you home, miss."

"Thank you; but must you know who I am?"

"I will not tell, and I'd better know."

"I'd rather not tell, though I believe I could trust you."

"Just as you please, miss. I'll go with you as near your house as you care to have me."

"Yes, and you'll tell me your name, and when I can—can——"

"What, miss?"

"Write you a letter of thanks, as my father will also do."

"It is not necessary, miss, for you have thanked me enough; but I will leave you here."

"At least tell me your name."

"It is Kit Keen, miss."

"I won't forget it, or you. My name is Florence," and she held out her hand and was gone.

Her rescuer turned in the opposite direction, but only for a few paces, then crossed the street and shadowed her to her house.

It was a handsome mansion, setting well back in the large yard surrounding it.

He looked at the number of the cross street, then went across and caught the elevated road down to the heart of the city and made his way to the secret service headquarters.

The hour was late, but the chief of Chicago's detective corps was still in his office, and, sending his name in, he gained immediate admittance to the great head of the secret service.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE BOY SLEUTH.

The handsome, stern-faced detective chief had been detained in his office until a late hour from important information brought in to him by his tireless sleuths, and had just started half-a-dozen men out upon a "mysterious case," when the orderly brought in the name of Kit Keen.

"Good! the young man I wished most to see. Show him in, Jenks," said the chief..

As the door opened he called out:

"Mighty glad to see you, my boy, for I was beginning to fear that you had given me the slip."

"Oh, no, sir, for I told you I would come back as soon as I settled my sister comfortably."

"Sit down and tell me how you found your sister and all you care to tell me about your affairs."

"I will have to tell you some other time, chief, for just now I'm in another scrape."

"By Jove, but you do get into trouble in this town, Kit."

"It seemis so, sir, for Chicago seems to hoodoo me every time."

"When did you get here?"

"Not two hours ago, sir, on the Western express."

"And you have already gotten into trouble?"

"I got my foot into it deep, sir."

"What is it this time?"

"A killing."

"Ah! that is bad, indeed."

"It was a case of couldn't help it, sir."

"I doubted you once, Kit Keen, and you turned out square and honest in all you said and did, so I have perfect faith in you now; in fact, I was wishing only to-day that you were here to run down a case that has thrown off all of my men, for, you know, you promised to come back and be my youngest detective," and the chief gazed with admiration into the handsome face of the youth.

It was a strong face, one wonderfully expressive, full of downright pluck and bulldog determination, and ready to do and dare, young as he was.

He was built well, with a wiry form, broad shoulders and every indication of being very strong and quick as lightning.

Well-dressed, wearing a slouch hat, he looked like a fellow who could turn his hand to anything.

In response to the chief's remark, he said:

"Well, sir, I did come back to go on with you; and I've begun way up by getting a case of my own."

"How was it, Kit? for I fear it is something serious."

"It was for the other fellows, for one has gone under and the other got it in the neck to remind him he was in bad company."

"How did it happen?"

"I was on my way from Polk street depot, sir, hunting lodgings for the night, when I heard a woman's voice crying for help.

"It was a bad neighborhood, especially for a woman to be in, as you know, sir; but I saw a horse and buggy alongside of the curb, and two men and a girl, as I found out later she was, and they were dragging her toward the cellar steps of the house they were in front of.

"I swung my satchel down upon the head of one man and he took to the ground for a nap, for my revolvers were in that little grip and they are no lightweights."

"Then the other fellow and I got mixed up, and I found he was too heavy for me, so I tripped him and down we went, and there the mischief was done, for he had a revolver in his hand which I had hold of and in the tumble it went off and he got the bullet sure, and it did the work."

"Then the girl shouted to me to take her away only too quick, and you bet I did it, for there was the horse and buggy, and I didn't wish to be caught in another killing scrape in this town, so I turned every corner I came to for the next ten minutes."

"Well?"

"I took the girl near to her home and left her, hitched the horse and——"

"Who is she?"

"She said her name was Florence."

"Nothing else?"

"She would not tell me her other name, sir, for she seemed terribly worked up over being called to court, and made me leave her some distance from her home."

"And you shadowed her?"

"Yes, sir, of course, but if she can be kept out of this scrape I hope you will do so, sir, for she is a lady, and she was kidnapped by those two men to be held for big money."

"I guess so; but do you know that I have just sent off half-a-dozen men on this case?"

"You have, sir?"

"Yes, for it was reported to me, and the man you killed——"

"He shot himself, sir, in the struggle, while both of us had hold of the revolver."

"All right; but all we could learn from the frightened people who heard the row, for few in that neighborhood care to appear, fearing to be recognized as bad ones themselves, was that there was trouble between

two men and a woman, a third man—that was you, Kit—came to the rescue, a fight followed, all went down, one was shot and the buggy drove off with the woman and one man, while the other man staggered to his feet and ran off."

"He escaped then. And who was the dead man?"

"He was a tough of the worst kind, well known to the police."

"And he is saying nothing as to his pal?"

"Being dead, he is not, and in killing him you did——"

"I didn't kill him, chief."

"Ah, yes, so you said before; but through you the city has lost one of its worst citizens."

"But I have told you alone, sir, of what I know about the affair."

"So much the better, for you have come back to be a member of my detective force."

"Yes, sir."

"And I want you to take this case."

"Yes, sir."

"Then, my young sleuth, the secret is between us and you can go to work on this case to-morrow."

"Thank you, sir. I'll go back to my old quarters to-morrow and begin work."

"And where is that monster Dane dog of yours; Satan, you called him?"

"I left him for the night in the baggage-room at the depot, sir, but if I'd had him along that other fellow would have been-chewed up."

"I'd gamble on that, after remembering what I saw in your little home, when he furnished the corpse for a funeral when that burglar entered it to rob you. Your dog is well named, Kit, for he is a devil; but come to-morrow afternoon and I'll enlist you, and Satan, too, in my detective corps, for I have another case also for you to handle."

And Kit Keen, a youth of mystery, a youth

with a history, left the detective headquarters happy at having been enrolled as a young sleuth.

### CHAPTER III.

#### ON THE TRACK.

Kit Keen went to a downtown hotel for the balance of the night, but was up early and at the depot to get his dog, Satan, which the detective chief seemed to be in awe of.

Satan was quietly awaiting the coming of his master and was not being crowded by any of the baggage smashers.

For once they were very gentle in moving trunks when near the dog, so as not to disturb him, as he lay just where Kit had told him to await his return when he arrived the night before.

Satan was a Great Dane of huge size, with an intelligent face, but with a very decidedly "don't-monkey-with-me" look about him.

"Say, young feller, what's the name of yer dog?" said a baggage smasher, as Kit came up.

"Satan."

"He looks it; but will you sell him?"

"Yes."

"Fer how much?"

"Ten thousand dollars *might* buy him, then again it mightn't."

"Does yer take me for Mister Rockyfeller?"

"No, I guess you don't trot in the same class."

"No, Rockyfellar's got more boodle than I has, but I has got less worry countin' my money."

"I guess you have, and more peace of mind, too. Come, Satan."

"How big is that dog, weight, height and length?" called out another baggage man who put on the air of a man who knows all about dogs.

"He weighs one hundred and fifty-five

pounds, is six feet, three inches from tip to top, and is just thirty-two inches high."

"I'll bet he hain't."

"Measure him then."

"Not on yer life."

"Get on the scales, Satan."

The dog did so and his weight was a trifle over what Kit had said.

"Now hold out his tail while I measure him."

"Young feller, does yer take me fer a fool?"

"I thought you were curious to know about my dog."

"I am, but I isn't curious enough to take chances to find out."

Kit laughed and measured the dog with a tape measure handed to him.

The measurements were exact.

"If I'd waited half an hour he would have weighed three pounds more," said Kit.

"I can't see it."

"I am going to give him his breakfast, and it will be three pounds of beef."

"Don't get funny, young feller, 'cause I spans sassy kids."

"Did you hear what he said, Satan?"

The dog's answer was a bark that sent the baggage smashers chasing themselves out of the room.

Kit laughed and went on his way, Satan close at his heels.

Going to a restaurant, Kit ate a good breakfast and fed Satan so generously that had the railroad men seen what he disposed of they would have decided that three pounds was far from the limit.

Buying a morning paper, Kit took the Illinois Central out to Hyde Park, Satan winning combined awe and admiration from all who saw the noble brute. Leaving the train at Fiftieth street, the boy and dog set off at a brisk walk along the lake shore.

Coming to a small, one-story cottage in a

large yard, and with a tall flathouse a hundred yards away the nearest neighbor, Kit said, as he went in:

"Here we are at our little home again, Satan, after having been gone over six weeks."

The dog gave a low whine as though he was glad to get back, and opening the front door with a double pass-key, Kit passed in, Satan at his heels.

There were but four rooms in the house, three on one side of the hall, a fourth back of it, and they were not uncomfortably furnished, the one in front as a living-room, the next a bedchamber and the rear one a combination kitchen and dining-room, the fourth being closed up.

Upon the walls of each room were unframed paintings and charcoal and pencil sketches.

The dog halted in the rear room and was looking fixedly at a large red stain on the floor.

"You have not forgotten what made that stain, Satan, have you?"

"Well, we must try and clean it away, though I have heard that human blood will never wash out of wood."

"No one has been here since we left, Satan, and I guess if anybody had broken in the ghost of the burglar you killed here would have scared him away; but now I am going to leave you in charge again, for I've got work to do, being as I am a detective now, as you are also, for the detective chief said so—yes, you are to be Satan, the Dog Detective."

"I'll tell you all about it when I come back, and I'll bring plenty to eat, too," and, patting the dog's head, Kit Keen locked the door and walked rapidly back to the railroad station.

On his ride downtown he read what the papers had to say of the "murder" the night before, and the escape of those who were

with the man who had been left dead on the pavement.

Getting out of the train at the station nearest the scene of his midnight adventure, Kit walked to the spot, to find there a curious crowd gazing morbidly at the place of the rescue and tragedy and expressing their views of the very mysterious affair.

The young sleuth picked up every word and opinion as he mingled with the crowd, learned that the house toward which he had seen the two men carrying the girl was the home of a poor widow and her son, the latter being the one who had been, as was said, murdered almost at his own door.

"I've learned something, at least, from them, though they know nothing about it," muttered the young ferret, as he wended his way to the detective headquarters.

## CHAPTER IV.

### KIT SHOWS HIS HAND.

It was just noon when Kit Keen entered the private room of the detective chief, who greeted him with:

"Hello, my young sleuth, the superintendent of police has just been here to talk over that killing last night."

"Did you tell him anything, sir?"

"No, for I let him do the talking, and kept what you know back, at least for the present."

"What does he think, sir?"

"He does not know just how to place it, for he thinks the woman in the case got one man to kill the other and they drove off together in the buggy, which the police found where you left it."

"Yes, sir."

"It was hired by the fellow you killed—a mean who shot himself in your struggle with him, for the livery stable man came down and identified the body, who was the good-for-

nothing son of the poor woman before whose house the affair happened."

"Anything else, sir?"

"Yes, the coroner's jury reported it a killing by a party, or parties unknown, for no one seems to be just sure that a fourth person—yourself—had a hand in the scuffle, and the dead man is now in his mother's house, while she bewails his end and praises him in the highest terms."

"Yes, sir, though others say he was a very bad man and abused his mother."

"That he was, for my men have so reported to me."

"And what else do they report, sir?"

"Very little, for the whole thing is regarded as a most mysterious affair."

"Where are Detectives Lampton and Pier-  
son, sir?"

"Both away on an out-of-town case."

"And Detective William Danvers and Dave Keepe, sir?"

"They are here, and splendid men."

"Yes, sir, and I may have to call on them for help in this case, for I've got an idea of my own that I wish to run down."

"You can have them, Kit; but no one re-  
gards the girl in the case as the young lady  
who was kidnapped, but take the idea that  
Saul Bent, the dead man, was killed by the  
one who escaped."

"Yes, sir, but I know different and I'm  
going to show you my hand and ask your  
advice."

"You'll get it, Kit, for all it is worth; but  
wait till I write you down on my books—you  
and your pard."

"What pard, sir?"

"Satan."

"Oh, yes, and I told him he was right in  
it with me," and Kit enjoyed the chief's joke  
in placing his highly-prized dumb companion  
on the rolls of the secret service corps.

The names were duly written down, Kit

signing for both himself and Satan—"in the absence of the latter"—he said, and the names were written in a well-formed style.

"Now, Kit," said the chief, when the two were once more alone together, "I wish to say right now that though you are young in years, your eventful life has given you much experience, and I have every confidence in your courage, ability and nerve to make a splendid ferret."

"In your own case, a few months since, when you came to me and boldly told me your story of how a man dying with consumption had committed suicide in such a way as to have you suspected of murdering him, because he had wronged you and yours, and said that you could prove your innocence, you did so in spite of everything pointing to your guilt, while his servant, who aided him in the plot, is now in prison, and his, the servant's ally in crime, your dog Satan killed when he broke into your little home."

"Under such trying circumstances you showed yourself a born sleuth, and, now that you come to me, I feel that I am making no mistake in putting you at once on duty as the youngest detective of the force."

"And more, my young friend, you come to me again with a case of your own, for, no sooner do you arrive in Chicago, than you have one cut and dried for you—rescue a young girl, get away with one villain and hold the key to the situation which neither my ferrets or the police can unlock."

"Now, young man, state your case, or, as you put it just now, show your hand."

Kit Keen had listened attentively to what the chief said to him, not a muscle of his hard-to-read countenance changing.

But when told by the chief to "show his hand" he said, in his very matter-of-fact way:

"First, sir, that girl is a lady, her father is rich and she says she was kidnapped, and I believe her."

"Yes."

"The man, Saul Bent, who was killed in the struggle with me, was a crook of the worst kind, and his mother knows it, for the girl was being taken to her house to be kept in hiding."

"You are doubtless right."

"The other man, on whose head I dropped the weight of my grip, and who escaped, was not of the Saul Bent kind, wicked though he might be."

"Granted."

"The girl kept her full name from me, was afraid to go to court—her cry wa's that she did not want to be found out—and I believe, though I may be wrong, that she knows just who her kidnapper was."

"Ah! I believe you have struck it, Kit! Now, what more?"

"I shall manage to see both Mrs. Bent and that girl, sir, for I wish to get upon the trail of the man who escaped, for then we will corral the outfit."

"You are on the right track, so go in and win," said the chief, earnestly.

## CHAPTER V.

### KIT KEEN IN DISGUISE.

Having laid his ropes to suit himself, Kit Keen set to work in his own energetic way.

He was most anxious to have his plans come out right, as any discovery that other ferrets or the police might make to implicate him in the matter, he know would cause him to be regarded as the slayer of the man, Saul Bent, and this he had no intention of allowing if he could prevent it.

Kit did not wish to bring the girl, Florence, into the mixup if he could avoid it; but he must not, to protect her, allow the ringleader of the kidnappers to escape.

His duty was to find the man who escaped, and unearth the plot.

So Kit returned first to his little home.

Satan welcomed him at the door, and set his tail to wagging briskly as he saw that his young master carried a large basket well filled with bundles.

The boy's first work was to clean house, and he worked hard to scour out the blood stain upon the kitchen floor, but in vain.

He soon had all in order, cooked supper for himself and Satan, and then the two went out for a walk, Kit to get all the papers and see just what they had to report on the Saul Bent killing case.

Kit retired early, after reading the various accounts, and, to his surprise, though Satan had his rug in the kitchen and had always slept there, he insisted upon lying down close by his master's cot.

"Hullo, Satan, what's the matter with you? I really believe you are afraid you'll see the ghost of that burglar you chewed up. You are a nice dog, you are, to get scared the first night you are a detective—why, what ails you?" and Kit was surprised to hear Satan give voice to a long, loud, dismal howl.

"Shut that death-music up or you'll scare me," cried Kit.

But the dog moved about nervously and went into the kitchen.

Kit at once arose and followed him, and Satan bounded toward the outer door with a fierce growl.

Instantly moving feet were heard, and looking out of the window Kit saw two men run rapidly by a distant street lamp.

"You know your business, Satan, for it was live men you knew were about, not the burglar's ghost.

"Somebody wanted to see us, so we must watch sharp in the future; but I guess they have gone for to-night."

So saying, Kit returned to his cot and Satan took his place upon the rug in the kitchen.

There was no more disturbance that night,

and by eight o'clock the next morning the boy had had his breakfast and was gone.

He had made a careful toilet, but not of his usual kind, for he was the very picture of a street urchin, ragged, soiled-face, with a wig of red hair and with a complete change from the Kit Keen the chief had seen the day before.

He strolled along, a shoe-blacking outfit swung over his shoulders, but took the cable car down Cottage Grove avenue until he reached Fortieth street, where he jumped off and made his way to the handsome home of the girl he had rescued from the kidnappers.

It was Kit's purpose, since he suspected that the girl knew who her kidnapper was, to learn what he could about her.

Strolling by the house he spied a gardener in the yard.

Here was a chance, if he could strike up an acquaintance with the gardener.

The gardener was working close to the fence now, and Kit, approaching him, exclaimed lightly:

"Dose are peachy flowers youse raisin' in dere, ain't dey?"

The gardener looked up and rested his arms on his rake. He didn't know whether to be amused or provoked at the young bootblack's remark.

Something about Kit's appearance must have struck him favorably, because his next remark was:

"I suppose you're an expert in botany, eh?"

"Naw, I don't monkey wid no greenhouse posies, but I knows a well-kept garden when I sees it."

The man seemed pleased with the compliment and amused at the boy, and approached the fence where Kit stood.

He rather welcomed a little relief from the monotony of his work, and something about the boy led him to want to talk to him.

Kit saw this and proceeded to flatter the old fellow and praise his garden up to the sky.

"Oh, these ain't nothing," the gardener was saying after one of Kit's outbursts, "ye ought to see the bed of chrysanthemums I'm a raisin' over yonder, by the summer-house!"

"Let me see 'em, will yer? I'll bet de're out o' sight."

The next minute he was over the fence and the old gardener was leading him toward the summer-house.

They had scarcely reached it when a young lady came out of the house with a large basket on her arm and a pair of shears in her hand.

She was coming down to the garden to clip some flowers.

She started on seeing a young bootblack with the gardener.

As yet the gardener did not see her, but Kit did, and he decided instantly that she was the one he had rescued two nights before.

Presently the gardener saw the young lady, only to notice her beckoning to him.

Leaving the bootblack he went to her.

What he said to her must have been about Kit, for he soon returned and remarked:

"Miss Florence wants to talk to you, young feller."

"What's up?" exclaimed Kit. "Is she mashed on me? Hully gee! Mebbe I ain't in it!"

"You go over to her and she'll tell you what she wants."

"But tell me the name of the leddy so I kin interdooce myself."

"Miss Florence."

"What are her sassiety handle, fer I doesn't git familiar on a short acquaint."

"Miss Florence Crandall."

"I doesn't remember to hev met her in sassiety; but she kin tell me," and Kit made his way to where the young lady stood.

There was no mistaking her—she was the young girl he had rescued.

She was young, scarcely nineteen, and had a very attractive face.

Clearly she was a petted child of fortune.

Her face was pale, there were dark rings under her eyes, and she wore an anxious expression, that Kit did not fail to see.

He took off his old slouch hat, bowed awkwardly and said:

"The flower guy yonder said as how yer wanted me, miss."

"Yes, I wish to send an important note, and do not care to give it to the servants here. Will you take it if I pay you well, and let no one see you do so?"

"Will a mouse eat cheese, miss? You bet yer sweet face I'll do it, an' mum's the word."

"Very well, when you leave here wait on the corner two blocks above for me, and I will bring it to you."

"I'll be rooted to the spot, miss, until you gits there," and Kit hastened back to the gardener, told him Miss Crandall had an errand for him, and passed out of the garden.

"I guess I've made a ten-strike," the boy sleuth muttered, as he walked away from the millionaire's home.

## CHAPTER VI.

### KIT GETS A "POINTER."

It was some time before Florence Crandall joined Kit, and she seemed nervous and her eyes showed that she had been crying.

"There may be an answer, but I don't know, and I hope there is not, but if there should be I want you to bring it to me."

"All right, miss."

"Here is a couple of dollars for you, and remember, you must not tell about this note, for it is a secret."

"Yes, miss; I was born tongue-tied, an' I thanks yer."

"Drop in to see the gardener again in the morning about this hour, for I may have something else for you to do; and, as I belong to the King's Daughters, you may have a mother, or some one else I can be of assistance to."

"Ther King's Daughters is them as runs kids like me into Sunday-school and has ther gospil sharps pray with 'em, ain't they, miss?"

Florence Crandall laughed in spite of herself at Kit's idea of the uses of her society, and said:

"Well, yes, and they do much good, too, in helping the poor, and I believe you can help me in my work."

"Oh, I'm a worker from way back, miss, when I sets in ter do it," and Kit walked away as brisk as a messenger boy just starting out on an errand with a fee in hand.

After he had turned the corner he glanced at the letter he carried.

He was surprised to see that it was unsealed.

In her nervousness Florence Crandall had left it open.

Then Kit looked at the address.

The name was:

"MR. HARVEY WILBUR,"

and the address was a sparsely-settled street running from the lake across to Prairie avenue.

"Hully gee!" he exclaimed. "Here's a graft. Watch me get next to what's in this letter."

Making his way into a lumber yard, Kit found a hiding place, and sat down to read the note.

It was written in a bold, though feminine, hand, and the address and date had been left off purposely.

What Kit read was this:

You won me under false pretenses, for I loved a different man from the one I now know you to be.

I thanked God you showed the cloven hoof before it was too late for me to save myself. When you saw that my eyes were being opened to your true character, you waited no longer to reveal yourself in your true color. Then I broke with you, glad of my escape, and believed all was ended between us. Then your dastardly plot followed, for, taking advantage of the absence of my parents for a few days, you implored an interview, and, fool that I was, it was granted. I remember the box of drugged candy you urged me to accept. One of them overcame my senses, and I returned to consciousness only to know that you had carried me from my home, that I was in your power, and that you were carrying out the threat you once made that I should one day become your wife by fair means or foul. I was saved by a youth who had the courage to count on odds in helping a woman, and the tool you hired to aid you lost his life, while you escaped. The papers are at fault, the police can find out nothing, and well for you it is thus, or my father would quickly punish your crime toward me. Go your way and remember if you cross my path again, I will betray the secret of Saul Bent's death, which my rescuer has kept hidden, for my sake and his own. Be warned, for no explanation to me can ever atone for your crime of taking me from my home.

With hatred deeper than the love I once held for you.

F. C.

"Jeewillikins!" exclaimed Kit, when he had read this letter.

After this favorite expression of his he read it again.

"Well, women are funny folks, and no mistake.

"I am not old enough to know much about love affairs, but if this letter don't tell two stories, I can't read, for she tells him to git, and then says he can't explain his conduct, and that means: 'If you can, just hustle yourself to get back to see me.'

"I guess I'm onto the deal now, and I've got Mr. Harvey Wilbur down fine, for he is the boss kidnapper, and may have to explain his midnight runaway with his girl to the police.

"Now to have a look at the gent."

With this free-and-easy way of looking at love affairs and things in general, Kit Keen went on his way until he turned into the street where the one he sought dwelt.

There was a large factory upon one block,

a paper mill upon the other, and a few residences.

Upon one side of the street were several shops, and in their rear a large, square storage warehouse, completely fenced in.

In front of this warehouse was a three-story brick building, the lower floor of which was used as a real estate office, the two above apparently as living rooms, for there was a hallway entrance to them.

Over the door was the sign:

"HARVEY WILBUR & Co.,  
Real Estate Agents."

Through the open door Kit saw the face of Mr. Harvey Wilbur.

It was the face of the kidnapper of Florence Crandall.

## CHAPTER VII.

### PLAYING TO WIN.

There were two clews by which Kit Keen knew his man.

First he had gotten a fair view of the one upon whose head he had brought down his traveling-bag two nights before.

He had seen a tall, well-formed man, with eyeglasses and wearing a frock coat.

Then, too, he had caught a glimpse of a mustache and side whiskers—altogether a very stylish-looking man.

The one he now saw fitted that description.

There was then the second reason for a recognition, and that was the fact that the man, now bareheaded, had strips of adhesive plaster extending from his forehead up into his hair.

"That is my mark," said Kit, and he took in the situation more closely.

It was a pleasant office, well-furnished, and a door opened to other rooms in the rear.

There was no other occupant in the room, and he was busy reading the papers, a number lying on the floor about his desk.

"Some doctor has mended his cracked head

and he's at his office, scared to death for fear he may be found out. I'll give him a shock.

"Mr. Wilbur!"

Kit blurted out the name in a startling manner and it brought the man to his feet.

The boy noticed that the face of the man had paled suddenly.

"Shine yer boots, Mr. Wilbur?" softly said Kit.

"Hang it, no! I was asleep and you startled me."

"I gits scared same way when I is thinking deep; but lemme shine yer shoes, sir?"

"No, get out!"

"I has a letter fer you, mister—one yer heart aches fer."

He held up the letter.

"If you have a letter for me, why didn't you say so?" he said.

"Yer didn't give me time, an' I wanted to see first that nobody was lookin', for this is important, this is."

"Give it to me."

"Is yer Mr. Wilbur?"

"Yes."

"Mr. Harvey Wilbur?"

"Yes, I told you."

"Excuse me, but I has ter be particular, I does."

"Boy, if you have a letter for me give it to me and I'll reward you."

"I ain't no fool ter give a letter to the wrong feller, when a pretty gal sends it, fer I know my business."

"I rather think you do," and the man forced a laugh.

"Sit down an' I'll shine 'em up while you reads yer letter from yer dovie-dove."

The man muttered an oath, sat down and put out his foot in a resigned way, and Kit handed him the letter.

He had sealed it, however.

He put more blacking on Harvy Wilbur's fancy socks, however, than on his shoes, in his desire to watch the man as he read the letter.

But Wilbur did not seem to know what was going on about him and read the letter with white face and set teeth.

He read it twice; then a third time.

The last time he seemed to get more con-

solation out of it than before, and muttered so that Kit heard the words:

"She has dismissed me for good—not much. The game can be played again and to a finish; but not now."

"Yes, boss, I has finished 'em, sir; but you has hurted yer head bad; been held up, I guess."

"No, I stooped down in the dark last night and hit my head on the corner of a table."

"My, but that was bad," and Kit looked the picture of sympathy.

"Where did you get this letter?"

"She gave it to me."

"Who?"

"Miss Florrie."

"You know her, then?"

"In course I does, and she knows me; that's the cause why she trusts me."

"I am sure you can be trusted, as you proved that before giving the letter to me. Can you take one to her?"

"Kin I? You see me, don't yer?"

"Yes, you are plainly in sight and hearing as well."

"Then you sees ther kid as kin take a letter to yer sweetness."

"Give it into her hands only and, when you bring me an answer, I will give you five dollars."

"Spose she fergits ter write?"

"But she will write."

"Spose she sends it by mail?"

"But she will not."

"I'll take the letter."

Wilbur at once turned to his desk and began to write, while Kit Keen began to take a very close scrutiny of the premises.

At last, as he saw Wilbur take up an envelope, he approached him, and the moment the letter was given him he darted away with it:

"I'll see yer later."

## CHAPTER VIII.

"YOUR MONEY OR YOUR LIFE."

The haste of the boy sleuth in leaving the office of Harvey Wilbur was for one purpose—to get that letter open before the envelope dried perfectly.

He had his knife open in his pocket, and

the back of the blade was put to work as he walked rapidly along.

He was successful in opening the envelope without tearing it, and he held it open until he came to the lumber pile where he had read the letter from Florence Crandall.

He took his same seat in a good hiding-place, and said:

"Now to see what he says."

He read the letter very carefully and it was as follows:

A beggar at the gate of mercy asks you to forgive. It was madness, for my love for you is a madness, that drives me to crime, and it was criminal in me to attempt to force you into a secret marriage with me. I failed, and I thank God, now that reason has come back to me, that I did, for you are free and I am in despair, for I have lost your respect, if not your love. I know all my guilt; that I am the cause of a life having been taken, and, even more to me, your unhappiness. The police have not discovered our secret—yours and mine—for the one who aided me is dead. Who was your rescuer I know not, and, doubtless, for reasons of his own, he is keeping hidden, for he certainly has not told his story to the police. If you know, please tell me, so I can guard, at least, my safety, as I feel, for the sake of the love you once held for me, you do not care to see me in prison. Perhaps, for your sake, he is keeping the secret and not for himself. He has certainly left his mark on me in the blow he gave me, for I'll bear the scar to my grave. I ask you to write me one line, to say to me that you will not tell your parents, or make this terrible thing public and that you will forgive me, even though you cast me off forever. What will you do?

"Answer by the boy, for he is a bright fellow and faithful, I feel sure, or you would not have trusted him. Ever yours only,

H. W.

"Now, if I am any judge, that is a very neat letter for a villain to write. It's the letter, too, that will ruin that girl again—if I don't open her eyes; and that is what I intend to do. Now I'll seal it and take it to her, and if I've done wrong in reading it, I'm pretty sure it will all come out right in the wash, as they say.

"Now——!"

The word ended in an exclamation, for a blow dealt at him with a heavy stick struck a plank above him, glanced and fell upon his shoeblock's box, hung on his shoulder, and smashed it to kindling wood.

As it was, the force of the blow toppled Kit over on his back.

"Give me that money yer hes stole an' is countin' here, or I'll knife yer, young feller!"

This was not pleasant for Kit to hear.

That the man who made the threat meant it, Kit saw at a glance.

He never had seen a worse face than he remembered.

But he did not take time to size the man up.

He knew that he had been seen to enter the lumber pile, and, it was supposed, to count over money he had stolen.

A man with such a face could not feel, if he had been counting his money, that he had gotten it in any way save by theft.

Kit saw in the man a tramp of the vilest kind, and supposed the lumber pile was his hiding place.

There was no one within call of his voice.

Kit had to take care of himself or suffer the consequence.

He thought of the letter he had, with the address on it, and the harm its possession by the man might assume.

All his past life came to his mind on the instant, and he remembered a former occasion, when he had been nearly killed while shadowing a man in a gambling joint. He had gone into a gambling den, disguised as a young sport, and, with his coat thrown one side, appeared to be deeply engaged in the game. On that occasion he had been assaulted by one of the habitues with a deal box, with the intent of robbery, and his faithful dog, Satan, had nearly killed the man who assaulted him.

The remembrance of this now flashed through Kit's mind, together with other thoughts.

Only a second of time really had gone by, but the boy was nerved to action.

His heart did not quail, and he was ready for what might come when he said:

"You'll knife me—nit."

"Give me yer money, then, or I'll knife yer," and the man drew a long, ugly-looking knife to add force to his threat.

Kit did not need this to prove what the man's intention was, as, had the blow he had dealt not been warded off, it would have crushed his skull like an egg.

The man wanted money, and he would kill to get it.

This Kit Keen realized.

He had no money to be robbed of, and he had no life to give at the demand of an assassin.

He lay back upon the lumber and watched his enemy.

The tramp had made known his wish; also his intention if it was not yielded to.

A life to him was nothing, so long as it was not his own.

Money to him was everything.

So he determined to take what was not given up, for he was fully convinced that Kit had been counting ill-gotten gains.

He therefore sprung forward, his ugly knife uplifted.

It was descending in a hand that would drive it to the hilt, when the young detective acted, and with that cat-like quickness natural to him.

There was a sharp report and the knife dropped from a dead man's hand, while the body fell heavily forward upon the boy, the hideous face, with its still, staring eyes, resting upon Kit's shoulder.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE BOY SLEUTH SENDS A TELEPHONE MESSAGE.

Kit Keen was fairly frightened.

All had come upon him so suddenly.

In a moment his own life had been in danger, and to save it he had taken that of another.

He shook off the body of the man, and it fell with a dull thud in a heap between the piles of boards.

Kit then rallied quickly.

If the pistol shot was heard and help came what excuse could he offer to clear himself?

If searched, Harvey Wilbur's letter would be found upon him.

He must not be caught there, and so he dropped down between the piles of lumber, found that he could force himself through a narrow space to an opening beyond, and he did.

He was not a moment too soon, for running feet and voices were heard.

The shot had given the alarm, and men ran to the spot whence the sound had come.

Kit reached the opening at the other side of the lumber pile just as the cries told him that the dead body of the tramp had been found.

No one saw him drop down into the street outside of the lumber yard, and, cool as an icicle now, he walked along to the driveway he had first turned into, and was soon with the crowd of workmen, hastening to the spot where lay the dead tramp.

As a detective, Kit felt it his duty to get what outside information he could of the killing, and keep still about what he could tell.

"A poor devil has kilt hisself in the lumber pile," said one.

"Guess he were starvin'," said another.

"A mon, afther havin' a Jojo face on 'im loike that, is no loss."

"He's done blowed his brains out."

"No, he got it in the neck, don't yez see?"

"Don't tech him, for the cowroner has got to sit on him."

"Divil a bit cares I to be afther toochin' the loikes o' that."

So the comments ran until a police officer arrived, clubbed his way through the crowd and dragged the body out into open space.

Another police officer then searched the lumber and found the tramp's knife.

Kit also saw the officers search the body and discover a couple of gold watches, a pocketbook and some bills.

"It was not because he was hungry, but a regular crook, that made him jump me," murmured Kit, and he turned and walked away, no one present suspecting that a street arab, as the boy appeared to be, could tell the whole story of how the man died.

"Its hard that I've got to be always mixed up in a killing," he muttered, as he walked along, for he felt it deeply.

"Another mysterious murder," the papers will have it to-morrow, and the police will be roasted for not doing their duty, while, if an officer had been there, they'd have said he was taking a nap in the lumber pile.

"Now, I've got to report this to the chief, that's certain; but, if I don't slow down on the killing pace I've struck the two days I've been in Chicago, I'll have to rent a graveyard to put my dead in."

"I did not kill Saul Bent, though I suppose I was the cause of the pistol going off in the scuffle."

"Well, I want no more of it, or I'll be hanged yet right here in Chicago."

Musing thus, Kit hurried on, for the sun was setting, and he was not long in reaching the vicinity of the Crandall home.

Florence Crandall was on hand to meet him, for she had seen him coming, and met him:

"You saw him?" she asked, anxiously.

"Yes, miss, I seen him."

"And—how was he looking?"

"His face looked as tho' he'd been in a mill with Terry McGovern, fer in course you knows he is ther champin——"

"Was he hurt?"

"Well, he were banged up fer keeps, miss, about ther head; but he were in his office, an' I give him a shine, an' he give me this fer you."

Florence Crandall grasped the letter, quickly hid it, handed Kit a dollar, and was turning away, when the boy said:

"I'm on hand like a thumb, miss, when yer wants me."

"Come to-morrow about this time," and she was off to read her letter, while Kit hastened to the nearest drug store to find a telephone.

The clerk was surprised at the remark:

"I wants ter use yer telly, ter call up my best girl."

"You look it, don't you?" sneered the young clerk.

"Well, that's what I'm here fer, so don't git fresh, Sassafras."

"Show me the price."

"Just chop it off of that," and Kit handed him a five-dollar bill.

"Where did you get this, young fellow?"

"Just like you gets your extra tin—knocked it down from my boss, young Eggflip. Come, hand out the change while I looks up the number."

The clerk watched him take the telephone book, run his eyes down the column, anxious to see him ring up.

This he did, calling out in an affected tone:

"Hello! hello! Is that you, Miss Gertrood? What did you say?—that's not yer name? Excuse me, I thought it was; but give me number five—one—five—Randolph. Yes, the chief detective's office."

The "hello girl" evidently had some comment to make at the other end of the wire, for Kit smiled, while the drug clerk stared and

quickly changed the five-dollar bill, as though he thought the call might refer to him.

"Is yer the detective chief?" asked Kit, after a moment's delay.

The answer appeared to satisfy the young sleuth, for he said:

"This is me, and Mr. Keen told me ter tell yer he'd be at yer office at ten o'clock—yer understand—Mr. Keen, and he says it's important."

Kit got a satisfactory answer, and turned to the clerk with the remark:

"Now I'll take my change and a cake of soap."

"You don't look as though you ever used soap."

"Yes, I does—I washes my puppy with it—it's good fer pups—try some," and Kit winked one eye, picked out the soap he wished, and went out of the drug store singing:

"Oh, mamma, buy me that."

The drug clerk knew what it was he wanted bought for him, and a pretty girl in the store seemed to know also, for she laughed.

## CHAPTER X.

### SATAN ON GUARD.

Satan met his master at the door of his cottage, having recognized his footstep, and a blind man could have seen the deep affection that existed between the boy and his dog.

"We'll have supper, Satan, and then I've got to go, but I won't stay long, I hope," said Kit, talking to the dog, as he always did, while the intelligent animal listened, his head cocked on one side, as though he understood every word said to him.

"There is more trouble, more killing, Satan, and I'm in it again, red-handed."

"If you had been along it would not have happened, for Weary Willies are as afraid of a dog as they are of water, and if that hobo had seen you, he'd been runing yet; but it is no joke, for I had to kill him."

Satan growled to show his appreciation of Kit's act, and to express, as well as he could, that he had done the right thing.

But there was a glare in his eyes that showed how much he would liked to have been there to sample the hobo.

Perhaps it was the remembrance of that

death scene there in the lumber pile that took away Kit's appetite, for he hardly tasted the supper he had cooked, and Satan got it all.

Satan also did his share of housework by licking the dishes clean before they were washed, and standing near as though he expected Kit to wipe them by using his shaggy hide as a towel.

Soon after the young ferret left his cottage, peered about him cautiously, and saw from a distant electric light the shadow of a man standing close against a large tree, by which he would have to pass.

He stepped back, quietly opening the door and whispered a call for Satan.

"Don't hurt him, Satan, but catch him—yonder, see!"

The dog did see and bounded away just as the man started to run.

Not a bark, or growl came from the dog as he drew close to the flying man, and, with a bound, was upon his shoulders.

Down went the man hard, and Satan stood across him now, growling, as a warning not to move.

The fellow was so badly frightened that he could not just then have gotten up.

"I want you—get up and come with me," said Kit, quietly.

"I hain't done nothin'," said the man, in a trembling voice.

"No, you didn't get the chance; but this is the second time you have been here, and I want to get better acquainted with you."

"Let him get up, Satan."

The man did get up, but with an effort, and Kit took a revolver from the man's pocket and led the way to the cottage.

"Now I'll leave Satan to look after you until I get back; but if you attempt any monkey business with that dog, you will be a dead man sure."

"You hain't goin' ter leave me here with that dog?" cried the man, in terrible fright.

"Yes, for he won't hurt you if you sit in that chair; but don't try to leave it—that's all. Lie down there, Satan, and keep him from being lonesome."

The dog laid down just in front of the man and fixed his eyes upon him.

Kit took a good look at the man and seemed to make him out, for he said:

"A crook from head to heels. I must know more about you."

Again the man begged not to be left in the room with the dog, but Kit said, firmly:

"That dog will not move until I get back—unless you try to get away."

With this the young ferret left the cottage, hastened to the Hyde Park station, and caught an express down to the city to keep his engagement with the chief.

The chief was in his office when Kit entered, still in his disguise as a street gamin.

"Well, sonny, what brings you here?"

"You don't know Kit then, sir?"

"Holy smoke! it's my young sleuth! No, Kit, I did not know you at first, with that street arab's dress suit on, that red wig and your freckles—you are certainly a hard-looking citizen."

"I'm getting to be, sir, for I've killed a man," and Kit sighed.

The chief sprang to his feet.

"Has no report been made to you, sir, of a man found dead late this afternoon?"

"Yes, a hobo in an uptown lumber yard, shot through the heart, by his own hand, it was supposed, for he was not robbed and had money and jewelry, no doubt stolen."

"I shot him, sir."

"You did?"

"Yes, sir, for the police found no pistol there, so how could he shoot himself?"

"I give it up; but how was it, Kit? for the men reported him a tramp of the most vicious kind."

"I will tell you the story from the start, sir, only this is my case, you said, so no one comes into it, or knows any secret, until I ask for aid."

"All right, Kit; it's a dead secret between us."

"I telephoned you it was important, and—"

"I knew that it was you at the 'phone, not wishing to be known; but you have made a find?"

"Yes, sir," and Kit told his story from his meeting Florencé Crandall to the attack on him by the tramp, his return home and Satan's capture of a prisoner.

"Kit, my boy, you are the boss of the force as a ferret, and you have done well; but this

killing of the tramp must not be told as it was, and now you must hurry back home before that dog of yours eats up the man you have there and we have another secret to hide. By Jove! we will take a carriage, and I will go with you, for I am off for the night and I wish to have a look at Satan's prisoner—if he has not eaten him up. Had you fed him?"

"Ah, yes, sir, Satan had his supper and mine, too," laughed Kit; and the two men were on their way to the home of the young sleuth, the chief extremely anxious about Satan and his prisoner.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE KING OF CROOKS.

The detective chief's home was well out toward Hyde Park, and going in a carriage with Kit Keen, as he was known himself in the public eye, he did not care to be seen with the young detective, either in disguise or not.

He wished to have Kit free from all suspicion that he was in any way connected with the secret service force, thus aiding him in his work.

But, after the story Kit had told him of his deadly encounter with the tramp, the chief had decided to protect the young sleuth all in his power, and had gone to his desk and taken something from it before leaving his office.

As they drove along, the chief said:

"Kit, you are proving yourself so capable of doing a man's work, you have such good judgment and nerve when needed, I wish to protect you all in my power."

"In the first place, I desire to have you know by sight many of my men, and yet not have them know you."

"On Saturday there is to be a meeting at headquarters, and many of the men will be there, and I want you also; but you are to be in another room, at a secret window, where you can see, study faces, and not be yourself seen."

"The hour will be ten, and you come before, and I will place you."

"To further protect you, and enable you to call upon any of the corps when necessary,

and have them answer promptly, here are two badges I wish you to wear."

"One is a silver badge of membership of our corps, and gives you admittance anywhere."

"The other is a gold badge, bearing the emblem of the superintendent of police, the chief of detectives and the chief of the United States Secret Service, and in the center the word—Obey."

"Pin them on, the first under your coat-collar and the other on the inside of your vest, and let me tell you that the latter is worn by but very few of my men—William Lampton, Perry Pierson, William Danvers and Dave Keefe being among the few."

Kit felt as proud as a peacock at this great trust in him shown by the detective chief, and pinned the badges on with delight showing in every feature.

He asked many questions as to duty, the exact power and uses of the badges and many more that the chief was glad to have him fully understand.

At last the carriage drew up where Kit had told the driver to stop—before the large flathouse around the corner from his home, and where it would attract no attention.

This precaution of Kit's the chief noted, especially as the young detective said:

"The driver need not know where I live, sir."

Telling the driver to go and get a cigar and drink with the quarter he gave him, and then return and wait, the chief and Kit waited until he drove off, and then went around to the cottage.

"Kit."

"Yes, sir."

"I have not forgotten the terrible sight I saw here the night your dog killed Dick Crouch, the counterfeiter crook. It haunts me yet."

"You'll find my prisoner all right, sir, unless he has tried to get away."

"And if so?"

"He'll be there yet—but dead," was the grim reply of the young sleuth.

Kit opened the outer, then the inner door with his pass-keys, but Satan was not there to meet him.

"Where is the dog?" asked the chief, anxiously.

"On guard, sir, or he would have met me at the door."

They passed into the hall, and there saw the prisoner, white as a ghost, still in the chair, with Satan lying at his feet, just as Kit had left him.

"My God, young fellow, is it you? It seems you have been gone for weeks, for never did I suffer such torture," and the prisoner no longer spoke in the dialect of the tough characters.

He was utterly colorless, and his face had a drawn expression that revealed how he had suffered.

The chief stood in the shadow of the hall and the man did not see him; but he saw the man's face and knew him.

Kit stepped over to the table and laid his revolver there.

It was a large calibre, self-cocking, five-shooter, the same with which the boy had killed the tramp that afternoon.

The man glanced quickly at the weapon, and, as Satan had been relieved from duty and had gone out into the hall to interview the chief, the moment the young sleuth also turned to follow him the man grasped the weapon, leveled it full at Kit's back and pulled the trigger.

But though he pulled the trigger, rapidly, once, twice and up to five times, there was only the click of steel meeting steel—there was no report.

Kit turned quickly and laughed, while the chief had drawn his weapon to fire.

But Kit stood between him and his intended human target and he dared not fire.

The young sleuth seemed to have known as much, for he called out:

"Don't shoot, chief! My gun is not loaded."

The prisoner uttered a groan and sank down in his chair, the weapon falling from his hand.

He now saw the chief, and, worse still, Satan came back toward him, with teeth glistening like steel guns on the broadside of a battleship.

"Stop, Satan!"

The order came none too soon, for the

dog's hot breath was almost in the man's face.

He had heard the clicking of the revolver, had seen the man standing up and felt that it was time for action.

"It is all right, sir, for he just did what I expected, for I threw the cartridges out of my gun and placed it there in reach, while I called Satan away.

"He thought he held trumps and played a quick and desperate game to drop me with a shot in the back, then kill Satan and have things all his own way. We didn't know you were hiding in the hall."

"Well, Kit, he played his cards and lost the game, and more, I know him and his record," said the chief, and he added:

"You have caught the King of Crooks."

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE BITER BITTEN.

The young sleuth's face flushed with delight when he heard the words of the detective chief.

He had not make a mistake, then, in having Satan run down the man who had been shadowing his home, as he feared he might have done.

The man whom the chief had designated the King of the Crooks seemed to have lost his nerve, after his two hours' wait under Satan's eye, and his failure to kill Kit Keen and the dog, when escape and revenge seemed within his grasp, for he knew that he was a dead shot with the revolver, and could have dropped both with ease.

The sight of the great detective chief, whom he well knew by sight, also aided in giving his nerves a shake.

So he sat there livid-faced and quivering.

"I am glad you know him, sir, and that I have not done wrong."

"You stick to the right track wonderfully well, Kit. You could not go wrong in protecting yourself from one who has twice been shadowing you, and perhaps oftener when you were not aware of it. You have caught a prize in this man," said the chief, "and won a reward offered, both by the Government and the city of Chicago, for you have heard of Al King, the counterfeiter?"

"Yes, sir, often."

"This is your man."

"Al King?"

"Yes."

"I was told that he had as many names as he has disguises, and when twice captured had escaped from prison."

"Yes; he bought his way out with counterfeit money. In some way he got hold of it in prison, through his brother, it was said, who visited him disguised as a preacher once, and as a lawyer another time, to take testimony regarding some case he knew about; but he escaped twice, and we have not been able to catch him, though you have done the trick very neatly and with dispatch."

"I am very glad of it, sir."

"Not more so than I am, my boy. But I can tell you more about your prisoner."

"What's that, sir?"

"It is a strange thing that he was captured just where his brother lost his life."

"His brother?"

"Yes, and by your dog, Satan."

"I don't understand, sir."

"That fellow there, under the name now of Doc Reynolds, for he was a doctor, but prepared to be a crook, was the brother of Dick Crouch, whom your dog Satan killed in this house."

Kit Keen was astounded.

"Doc Reynolds came here to kill you," continued the chief.

"To kill me?"

"Yes, and your dog Satan."

"It is a lie," shouted the prisoner, rousing himself.

Unheeding him, the chief continued:

"Dick Crouch twice risked hanging on the gallows to get into prison to save his brother. Satan then killed Dick Crouch the night he sneaked into your home to rob, or kill, and the dog belonged to you. Now, Kit, this man came here to kill you and your dog, and—the biter got bitten."

"Is seems so, sir."

"I take it, also, that he was on the watch for your return, and, supposing you had considerable money, he expected to find that here also."

"What do you wish to do with him, sir?"

"Jail him first thing."

Saying which, the chief advanced and clapped the handcuffs on Kit's prisoner. Leading him out of the cottage, he bundled him into the carriage, and got in after him.

"There's some reason for this fellow's being in town," said the chief, in parting from Kit, "and I may want you to go on his case. Hold yourself in readiness for it."

"Yes, sir," answered Kit.

"In the meantime," continued the chief, "let me know of anything new in connection with the kidnapping case. Good-night."

"Good-night, chief."

The carriage door snapped and the chief rode away with his prisoner, leaving Kit standing on the sidewalk, flushed with pride and pleasure at the brilliant stroke he had made and at the confidence the famous chief was placing in him.

### CHAPTER XIII.

#### THE YOUNG SLEUTH'S BUSINESS CALL.

It was late in the afternoon of the next day before Kit and Satan turned out for business.

They went to a restaurant and had a good lunch, the man charging double for what the dog ate, and Kit payed it willingly, and with the remark:

"I'm considerable of a feeder myself, Satan, but you can take the cake and the *et ceteras* with it; but the Good Book says 'the laborer is worthy of his hire', as I learned it at Sunday-school, and I guess you has earnt yourn an' more, too."

Then Kit and the dog returned to the cottage, and the young detective sat down and wrote a letter, which he put in his pocket carefully, looked to see that his make-up as a bootblack would stand close inspection, and, with a good-by to Satan, went out on a new trail.

His destination was the home of Mrs. Bent, the mother of the man who had been killed three nights before by the exploding of his pistol.

As he was not anxious to get there before dark, he went to a news-stand and gave the boy a quarter to let him look over his papers.

Both the morning and afternoon editions

were full of the "recent lawless deeds" done in Chicago.

The "Saul Bent murder," as it was called, was being still worked on, with "roasting," as usual, for the police and detective force for not finding the murderer, though all admitted that the killing of Bent was, indeed, a service to the city.

The "Murder of the Tramp in the Lumber Yard" was also written up, and the breezy writers of the press, the never-to-be-downed reporters, had asked the reading public a few hard questions.

"How could a man be shot with a knife, for a bullet wound had killed him, and yet only a knife had been found by the body?"

"If a suicide, where was the pistol with which life had been taken?"

"If killed for his money, why had it not been taken?"

"Who was he?"

These questions remained unanswered, greatly to Kit Keen's satisfaction.

The young sleuth was glad, also, to see that the watches found on the dead man, and other things, had been claimed by the owners, who recognized the dead man as the one who had robbed them.

In this case, also, Kit saw that the city had been a gainer by the mysterious death of the tramp.

Kit noticed that nothing was said of the capture of Doc Reynolds.

As the time had come for his visit, Kit wandered in the direction of Mrs. Bent's home.

Her evil son had been buried in the morning, with, of course, a large crowd of "mourners," who attended from morbid curiosity, and the woman was alone, she having dismissed the old woman gossips who would have liked to talk over the sad affair with her.

She was both tired and in a bad humor when Kit knocked at the door.

"Who be there?"

"A young feller."

"What does yer want at this time o' night?"

It was just eight o'clock, but Kit said, innocently:

"I knows it's late, missus, but I has a letter fer ye."

"Who is it from?"

"A pal o' Saul's," and Kit felt that he was getting along fast as a young liar; but he excused it on the plea of duty in that case.

"What's his name?"

"Sh——! I'll tell yer—lemme in, missus, fer its got ter be looked to."

Mrs. Bent took a close look up and down the street and then opened the door, while Kit glided in as quickly as a house cat.

The boy put his fingers on his lips and led the way to the back room, where there was a bright light.

The woman followed, eyed him closely, seemed satisfied that he was a "bad one," and said:

"Give me ther letter."

Kit handed her the one he had himself written.

"Who is it writ it?"

"Sh——, read it."

"I haven't my glasses on; but yer say its a friend of Saul's?"

"The gent who was in ther muss with him ther other night, missus."

Mrs. Bent quickly found her glasses, put them on and tore open the letter in a way that showed she was not used to getting them by mail or hand.

Kit watched her as a cat would a mouse.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### KIT SETS A TRAP.

Mrs. Bent regarded the letter, when open, in a way that convinced Kit that she did not know any too much about reading.

She then asked:

"Who be you, young man?"

"The fellers call me Sammy Shine-em-up, missus."

"Where is yer livin' home?"

"Ther street; but I know'd yer poor son Saul, missus," and Kit wiped his eyes on his sleeve.

"They all liked Saul, but he were not a good son ter me, save when he wanted ter help himself."

"I know it all, fer I was with 'em t'other night, but lay low, yer bet."

"Did yer see Saul kilt?"

"Yes, missus."

"Who kilt him?"

"There were a feller as run in when ther gal piped up, an' he an' Saul hed it rough an' tumble an' yer son's gun goes off an' that ends it."

"Why didn't ther gent help my son?"

"Well, yer sees, ther same feller hit him a dig on ther brain-pan that knocked him out, an' the gal skipped off in the hearse with her reskooer—see? an' ther gent dug dirt, too, fer ther cops was blowin' ther whistles an' things was gettin' hot, I tell yer, so I skooted, too, an' on'y Saul got it in ther neck."

"Well, it were a pity."

"Yes, missus, fer ther was good money in it fer you, I guess."

"How does yer know?"

"Oh, I hain't no born fool, if I is young, an' I knows that this gent put up ther job ter kidnap ther pretty gal, an' Saul got ther boodle ter help him in ther game, while you was ter be a mother to ther young leddy."

It was a bold break for the young detective to make, for some of it was guesswork; but Kit was a bold youth, and ventured.

He saw that he had hit the nail on the head, for the woman said nothing, and Kit went on:

"It were sure to win, on'y that strange feller run in an' broke up ther game; but ther gent has got him fixed with boodle, an' he hain't sayin' nuthin', as yer sees by ther papers."

"An' ther gent hes got ter pay me big money fer my poor, dead boy."

The woman wiped her eyes and so did Kit, who then said:

"Better read ther letter, missus, an' see what it tells yer."

"You read it, sonny, fer my eyes is blinded by weepin', an' you seems ter be in ther game."

"You bet I is, an' in it ter stay, an' I'll see justice done yer, missus," and Kit read the letter in a whisper and very slowly, as follows:

I mourn the death of your dear son, and will repay you well for his loss. No suspicion falls upon me and none on you, and I have bought off the one who did the deed. I wish the lady to go to your house on a certain night, in the care of some one you can tell me is true, some friend of your son, and you are to have the minister there to marry us.

I will let you know in time, and you can trust the boy, who will report to me what your reply is.

H. W.

"Well, that's han'some in him, fer he says he will pay well, en' Saul told me he were a perfect gent. Ther room is ready for ther leddy, an' I knows ther man ter help him—Vic Handy. Does yer know him, sonny?"

"I'll find him, if yer tells me whar ter look fer him."

"On ther top flo' o' ther Night Hawks' Roost. Ask fer Mrs. Handy, an' she'll tell yer whar Vic is, fer he hes ter lay low in daylight, as he's wanted out at Joliet."

"Who is ther leddy?"

"Well, Saul didn't know; but he said she had lots o' rocks, an' ther gent wanted ter marry her an' then he'd git his share, so I knows ther man ter splice 'em—ther same as before."

"A reg'lar sky pilot?"

"Waal, he hain't now, fer ther congregation kicked him out fer back-slidin'; but he'll do it fer ther dough, an' everything goes. He come 'round commiseratin' me 'bout poor Saul an' struck me fer a ten of ther fee he didn't get."

There flashed through Kit's mind that his call had panned out well; that he had "struck it rich," as he said to himself, and he shed a few more tears for "poor Saul" and took his leave.

He went to supper at a place on Randolph street, and then wended his way to see his friend, the detective chief.

The young sleuth found the chief in his private office, was admitted by Jenks, who had come to know him and had his orders, and the old and young ferrets were engaged in earnest conversation for an hour.

"Kit, you are always springing some new surprise on me. You are a wonder, and I feel that you are going to entrap another bunch of crooks," said the chief.

"I hope so, sir, and it looks that way now."

"It certainly does; but, as you say, that lovely girl must be protected in this matter, for she is wholly innocent, and her loving a scamp is not her fault, as she believes him a good man and that his devotion to her led him to do what he did, for fear her father would refuse to let him have her. I have

looked his record up, and he is said to be a well-to-do business man, a little wild, but there can be nothing found out against him."

"He don't look right to me, sir, but I will soon know, for I intend to pay him a call, and also the young lady, and she must give him the slip."

"Yes, and doubtless will; but go in, Kit, and play your cards to win in your own way, for I will back you, and Detectives Danvers and Keefe are held ready for your call."

"Thank you, sir," and Kit left headquarters and returned to his little home.

## CHAPTER XV.

### SATAN CHANGES MASTERS.

Kit Keen's thoughts were very busy as he went homeward after the interview with Mrs. Bent.

He had made a discovery of importance, and one that greatly interested him.

Mrs. Bent was as deep in crooked deeds as had been her son, in spite of her attempt to assume an air of innocence, appear to be a hard-working woman and keep up a show of shabby respectability.

Mrs. Bent had an affection for only herself, and certainly had been weaned from her son by his treatment of her, and not through his evil life.

Through him she had a chance to make a good stake, as a "receiver of stolen goods," or, more plainly speaking, to keep Florence Crandall in hiding until the man who sought her fortune through her hand might force her to marry him by fair or foul means.

Kit supposed that Harvey Wilbur must love Florence Crandall, for she was a young girl to win a man's love through her beauty and her true character, independent of her being an heiress; but the young sleuth was wise for his years, and felt sure that there was some trouble—that perhaps the man, in spite of his good looks, gentlemanly appearance and apparently being in a good business was not acceptable to the parents of the young lady.

"When she knows him, then she won't love him," was Kit's argument, and his mind was made up that she should know him.

But first he must know him himself.

To do this Kit decided to play as bold a game with Harvey Wilbur as he had with Mrs. Bent.

He went to his home, had supper with his dumb pard, Satan, and sat down to lay his plans.

He soon decided what he should do, and he went out, taking Satan with him for a run.

Kit did not care to see Harvey Wilbur then; he was not prepared to do so; he merely wanted to have a close survey of his place and the surroundings.

That part of the town was quiet at night, but lights were here and there visible in the windows of houses.

There was a light in the second floor over the office of Harvey Wilbur.

It was doubtless where he lived.

That the man, with his face disfigured with adhesive plaster, would not care to go out, Kit argued, and, therefore, would be at home.

Suddenly he decided he would like a look at the man's rooms.

It was late, but he would try it.

Still dressed as a street arab, Kit, with Satan at his heels, rang the hall-door bell.

Through a speaking tube came the question:

"Who is it?"

"A young gent to see Mr. Wilbur," Kit answered, through the tube.

"I have retired, and do not feel well—leave your card in the box, please."

"That's him," muttered Kit, and he called back:

"I'm ther young feller as shined yer boots, boss, and give yer a letter."

"Ah! come up."

The spring lock was pulled back, the door opened, and Kit entered.

At the top of the steps stood Harvey Wilbur in dressing-gown and slippers.

"Have you a letter for me, my boy?"

"Nit, but I has some chin music ter give yer."

"You have seen her?"

"Hev I? Well, I guess, and give her your letter an' she told me ter tell you she'd write soon, an' yér was not ter git black in ther face from worry o' mind, an' yer cud trust me fer keeps."

"When will she write?"

"Soon's she gits over considerin', an' I is ter bring ther letter; but you is not ter write her until you hears, as trouble might come of it. I tells yer that letter jist teched her heart an' funny bone, fer she smiled until she weeped, an' weeped until she smole, jist ther same as if she were readin' po'try an' funny jokes."

"I am glad she was pleased," and the man's eyes were upon Satan as he stood in the doorway.

"Is that your dog?"

"It's my bruther—ther only kin I has got."

"What's his name?"

"Satan."

"The devil of a name for a dog."

"That's what—but it goes."

"Where did you get him?"

"Stole him."

"You young thief."

"That's what."

"What will you take for him?"

"Does yer take me fer one of them Bible guys that sold their bruther acause he wore a spotted coat an' they hed none? No sir, Satan is not fer sale."

"I'll make it a hundred."

"It don't fetch; but I'll tell yer what I'll do, boss."

"Well?"

"I'll lend him ter yer fer a time, until I gits a roost of my own, fer ther cops is a thinkin' I stole him."

"Good! Is he kind?"

"No bull-terrier is more kinder; but yer hes dandy rooms here, and I knows Satan will be O. K.; but maybe yer don't want no young feller 'bout my size an' age ter keep yer from bein' lonesome."

The man was silent a moment and then said:

"Leave the dog now and he shall have good care, and I'll see later what I will do about taking you."

Kit nodded his thanks, and said:

"I'll jist whisper ter Satan not ter git homesick, seein' as I'll not be with him. Don't be cross with him, an' when yer feeds him, don't be stingy, fer he loves grub."

"I'll remember your instructions, my boy," and at Kit's suggestion, Harvey Wilbur went

to the rear rooms and got something to eat for Satan, giving it to him himself.

"Now, Satan, yer is ter live in this palace fer a time, an' so behave yerself like a doggent, an' maybe I kin git here one day."

Satan seemed to understand all that Kit said, and saw him depart, lying down on a rug as though to go to sleep.

Chuckling to himself, Kit started homeward.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE MESSENGER BOY.

Florence Crandall was again gathering flowers when she saw Kit come into the yard.

She gave him the basket to carry for her, and at once plied him with questions as to whether he had again seen Harvey Wilbur, and if he had a letter for her.

"Not any letter, miss, but I come ter say I seen him an' he wants ter know if your pa an' ma hes come home yet?"

"Not yet, and they will be detained for several days, for I had letters from them to-day; but how is Mr. Wilbur's head where he got hurt?"

"Gettin' better, miss; but he's got ter go out o' town fer a day or two on business, he said. When he comes back I'll tell yer," and Kit left the young lady, his mind greatly at ease, as he said to himself:

"Now my mind is easy, for there's no telling what a girl will do, and I have been afraid she would write him, or see him, and spile my game. I'll skip home and fix to play my trump card on the man that planned to marry her in such a mean way."

Two hours after, a bright-looking messenger boy approached the real estate office of Harvey Wilbur & Co.

His uniform was not a new one, his cap a trifle large for his head, but he looked like a youth who was no slouch and could take care of himself.

Satan lay at the door of the office, taking life coolly, but rose quickly as the messenger boy approached; but a low order to the dog caused him to lie down again.

In the office, looking over his books, was Harvey Wilbur.

As before, he was alone, and no one was

visible in the rear office, as far as the messenger boy could see.

"You're Mr. Wilbur, ain't you?"

The man looked up and answered:

"Yes; have you a message for me, or a letter?"

"No, sir, for the party I came from don't write letters the police might get hold of."

"What do you mean?"

"You knew Saul Bent, didn't you?"

"Who was he?" and the man's face paled.

"Oh, I'm on, and you can talk to me, for I was Saul Bent's young pard an' he got me my job, so I could be useful to him. His mother sent me to you."

Harvey Wilbur looked straight into the face of the messenger.

But his gaze was met with a half-impudent, half-knowing stare, and the man said:

"Tell me what you want."

"You see, I know about the little racket that caused poor Saul to turn up his toes, and as he trusted me, his mother does, too, and sent me to tell you that I can help you out in that girl affair, and her house is all ready and a preacher, too, whenever you care to try it on again."

This was plain enough, and the man could no longer dodge the question.

The young detective was posted, certainly, as to his affairs, as far as his hiring Saul Bent was concerned to aid in the kidnapping of Florence Crandall.

Harvey Wilbur frowned to feel that such a young fellow had been trusted with his secret; but he knew it, and there was no help for it.

He feared to attempt to brazen the thing out by denying any knowledge of Saul Bent, for the messenger might know too much.

Another look into Kit's face seemed to convince him that he might do even better than had Saul Bent.

So he said:

"You are a messenger boy?"

"Yes, sir."

"How can you get time to come here?"

"Say I've got a call from a gent I met on the street; fill up my ticket for time and amount, and the one I am serving pays the freight—see?"

"I think I do; but who else knows of your coming here besides Mrs. Bent?"

"No one else is on, for Saul was close-mouthed as a clam, and only took me in because I helped out by getting the rig for you and looking up the parson. Me an' Saul have been in dead sporty games before, and Mrs. Bent knows me and wanted me to see you, for she's out burying expenses on Saul, and says the old gag can be worked just as it was arranged, and I'm to do the underground work."

"I believe it will be all right, and I'll pay you well; but I must communicate with the lady first, get her answer, and then arrange to post all interested."

"I can take a note to the lady and bring you her answer, and I'll fix it all with Mrs. Bent and have the preacher there."

"I'll think it over and telephone down for you by number."

"All right; but I was sent to Mr. Crandall's lawyer with a telegram which I put in the envelope and read, and that's what made me go to Mrs. Bent about it."

"What was the telegram?" anxiously asked Harvey Wilbur.

"It was from Mr. Crandall, who is in Detroit with his wife, and told his lawyer to arrange matters for himself and family to start for New York within a week to sail for Europe, and say nothing about it."

The man started at this and said:

"Then I must act at once. I will write the letter now for you to take to Miss Crandall. If she is out, wait to see her."

"Yes, sir; but can I play with your dog, or will he bite me?"

"You had better not worry him, for he's a fierce dumb brute."

Just then, as though to show how fierce he was, Satan barked.

"Great Scott! do you call that a dumb brute?" cried Kit.

But Satan showed no anger toward him, and soon they were getting along famously, for the messenger was feeding him with peanut brittle.

After a long wait, Harvey Wilbur finished his letter to Florence Crandall, and Kit started off with it at a run.

## CHAPTER XVII.

## KIT HAS A STORY TO TELL.

The young sleuth did not pause again in the lumber yard to read the letter that had been given him by Wilbur to carry to Miss Crandall.

He cared not for the memories connected with the pile of lumber and passed on.

But he soon found a retreat where he could be unmolested, and he halted and took the letter from his pocket.

It was not sealed.

He was surprised to discover that there was no mucilage on the envelope.

Luck certainly seemed to favor him in this, for he had seen Wilbur moisten it and the man had supposed it had been sealed.

"Now to see what he says."

Kit took the letter out of the envelope and read as follows:

The bearer is faithful and I trust him, as you can. I have been broken-hearted over my act toward you and I can tell you what I dare not write. I wish to see you, and I must see you. Your father has forbidden me to come to his house, as he has taken a strange dislike to me, and you have also told me I should not come; but I must see you or I will not answer for what I may do to myself. I cannot stand much longer all that I am suffering. I implore you to meet me, and, if you will do so, answer by the messenger. Then I will have him meet you in a carriage and drive you to a quiet house, the abode of a dear old widow, mother of one of my clerks. There we can be safe and you can hear all that I have to tell you.

Don't fail me, I implore you. Devotedly,  
HARVEY W—.

"The villain! Well, now, isn't he one to put behind the bars! And Mrs. Bent is the dear old widow—one old she-devil, she is. Well, I know just what I'll do, and if she does not take a tumble to what that fellow is, then I can do no more to help her out of a mighty ugly scrape. They say women won't believe any bad of one they love; but she looks sensible, and maybe she don't love him so hard after all. She's had one show of what he would do, and I guess she'd like to skip another. The old man's onto him, that's sure, and I wish he was here; but no, I'll work it all out my own way."

Thus mused the young sleuth as he went along, his face wearing something of a worried look, for he was anxious as to just how Florence Crandall would receive all that he had made up his mind to say to her.

He was determined to save Florence Crandall—with her aid, if he could, without it if he needed to.

The elegant home was reached and, to his delight, Kit discerned Florence in an easy-chair on the piazza, in a quiet nook, all alone.

She saw him ascend the steps and had no idea that the smart-looking messenger was the young man whom she had before seen in the disguise of a bootblack.

She called to him to come to her and, touching his cap, Kit said:

"I have a letter for Miss Florence Crandall, miss."

"I am Miss Crandall."

"It is important, and I was to place it in Miss Crandall's hands, and where no one could see me, miss."

"I am Miss Crandall, and none of the servants is within hearing."

"Here it is, miss, and it was given to me unsealed; but," and he whispered, "I know just what the gent wants you to do."

The sweet face of Florence Crandall flushed, then paled, and she read the letter with changing expressions, Kit watching her attentively the while.

"It is strange that Mr. Wilbur should ask this of me, for you say that you know what his wish is."

Kit looked about him quickly, and said, in a low, earnest tone:

"Yes, miss, I do know. He says you can trust me, and you can, for I am your friend, not his, and I want you to know all I can tell you about him. Then, if you still trust him, and will not believe me, I have done my duty by you, and I shall see that he does you no harm. Will you trust me, miss?"

Florence Crandall had risen as the young detective spoke, and at first was indignant; but there was such an honest appeal in his look and words that she was deeply impressed.

Resuming her seat, she said, coldly:

"Mr. Wilbur said you were to be trusted—what have you to say?"

"Trusted by you, miss, but not by him, for I am your friend and his foe."

"What have you to say?"

"Would you trust the feller who saved you the other night when you were kidnapped?"

Miss Crandall became very white, her lips quivered, and she asked:

"What do you know?"

"I am that feller, miss."

"You! yes, I know your voice now, and recognize you, though I had but an indistinct view of you then."

"Do you not know me also, miss, as the bootblack that took you note to Mr. Wilbur?"

Slowly she said:

"Yes, I believe I do—yes, I know your eyes. Do tell me what all this means, for I am dizzy trying to understand."

"It means, miss, that the man you have trusted has deceived you, and he is trying to get you into his power, to force your father to buy him off for big money. He is a villain, miss, and I will prove it to you, for I have a good deal at stake as well as you have, for you remember that a man was killed the other night in his struggle with me, and I have kept the secret for your sake and for my own. Will you listen now to all I have to say, miss?"

The lovely face had lost every atom of color, the lips were set, and with an effort she said:

"Tell me everything—I must know all, and now."

### CHAPTER XVIII.

#### KIT SETS HIS TRAP.

Kit Keen could see how deeply moved Florence Crandall was; that she seemed to dread some terrible blow to fall upon her, and which she was dependent upon the young man alone to save her from.

His manly, honest and intelligent face gave her confidence in him, so much, in fact, that she did not count his years, especially when she recalled how he had saved her from her kidnappers and also had kept her name out of the papers.

"Sit down, please," she said, pointing to a chair near.

Kit did so, leaned forward, and in a low voice began his story in a way that gained her confidence by telling her about his sister, and how he had, after two years' search, found her and kept her life from being wholly wrecked.

"That work got me on the secret service force here, miss, and the detective chief calls me his young sleuth—see, here is my badge—and I had just come back to Chicago the night I heard your cry for help."

Then the young detective told of how he was determined to track her kidnappers, and the way in which he went about it, making the discovery through her letter to Harvey Wilbur, and which, he frankly confessed, he had read.

His visit to Mrs. Bent came next, and all that that woman crook had let him know, with the plot to force her, Florence, into a marriage with Wilbur, which would give him a hold upon her life her father could not easily sever.

About the degenerate preacher who was to have performed the ceremony he also told her, and then of his visit to Wilbur the night before, leaving his dog there, and next his recent call, in which the man believed he had come direct from Mrs. Bent and at once entered into another plot to get her, Miss Crandall, in his power.

"Now, miss, I have told you my story, and I want your help to prove it all to you. I can pinch Wilbur, as a kidnapper, and the pal of Saul Bent; but it might force you to appear, and that I do not want, nor does the chief, so my plan is for you to send a message, not a letter, by me to meet you at a certain place——"

"No, no, no! I will not——"

"You are not to go, miss, but I want to get him away from his place, for I am sure he has no clerk or servant there, and, while he is gone, I'll go there and search his rooms, for I saw your photograph there last night, and know where he put your letter the other day."

"Yes, yes, he has three photographs of mine, and a number of my letters—oh! can you, will you get them for me?"

"That's just what I intend to do, and before the police go to his rooms, for then there's nothing to show and bring you into the game—I beg pardon, miss, I mean the trouble."

"And you will do this for me?" asked the girl, in a voice full of emotion, while her eyes were filled with tears.

"You bet I will, miss, for it's to be a clean break from that crook."

"Let me tell you that Mr. Wilbur came to Chicago several years ago, and, as he seemed to have money, he made acquaintances, got into society and I met him. He was always most gentlemanly, had traveled much, was entertaining, handsome and—well, I suppose I was fascinated with him, for now I feel that it was not love, as it will not hurt me much to give him up, now that I know he is what you have shown him to be. Yes, you have saved me from making a false step that would have wrecked my life, and God bless you for it. The other night I went out with him for a short drive; he had a box of candy, and now I know that it was drugged, for I lost consciousness soon after getting into the buggy and—he picked that man up somewhere and—I became conscious just as they lifted me out to carry me into the house. You know the rest."

She had spoken rapidly and earnestly.

In answer to Kit's request that she would appoint a place to meet Wilbur at the Confederate Monument in Oakwoods Cemetery, as it would take him some time to go there, and, after waiting there an hour, if she did not come, he was to go to an address where she would be, if prevented from going to the cemetery, Miss Crandall said:

"My fate is in your hands, my very brave young detective and good friend, so tell him what you please to get him away from his home, and I depend upon you to get my letters and photographs."

"I'll not disappoint you, miss. I'll fix it all right, never fear, so you will not be known in it, and he will have troubles of his own in looking out for himself."

Having gotten his plans arranged to his own satisfaction, Kit took his departure, Florence Crandall warmly grasping him by the hand and saying, earnestly:

"Now remember, Kit Keen, you have a man's work on your young shoulders, but I have faith in you. Now that I know that man's plot against me, I hate him."

## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE PLOT.

Back to the home of Harvey Wilbur went the supposed messenger, and he found the

man anxiously pacing his office, while Satan lay upon the floor, evidently watching for the coming of his young master and evidently wondering why he was left for so long a time in strange quarters.

But if he could have said so, Satan would have had to say that he had been treated right royally.

"Well?" said Wilbur, eagerly, as Kit came in.

"I saw her, sir, and gave her your letter."

"And you have a letter for me in reply?"

"No, sir, she was not able to write you, but she told me to say that her parents had not yet returned from Detroit, but she expected them day after to-morrow."

"Then there is no time to lose."

"No, sir."

"Will she meet me?"

"She wished you to go to the Confederate Monument in the Oakwoods Cemetery at four o'clock to-morrow and wait for her."

"I'll be there."

"If she does not get there by five o'clock, you are to go to this number, a cottage in Hyde Park, where a friend of hers lives."

"I see; but she may be unable to go to Oakwoods, then."

"There are reasons that may prevent her going there, and, if she is prevented, then go to the address on the card I gave you."

"I will, and I understand fully; but I wish you to go to Mrs. Bent's and tell her to prepare for a lady guest, and to have her clergyman friend there for to-morrow night, between eight o'clock and midnight."

"I'll go, sir, but you had better write her a note, for she will want more than my word for it."

"All right, I'll do so," and the note was written, sealed and handed to Kit, who then said:

"I will then have to go and report my time and pay up, saying I will be needed to-morrow, I suppose."

"Yes, for I wish you to take another letter to Miss Crandall to-morrow morning. Now I will give you the money to pay up your time."

"Thank you, sir; but won't you please figure it out on one of your letterheads, so they will understand it?"

Hervey Wilbur was in a very good humor and did as requested, handing Kit a liberal fee for himself.

This done, with a pat on the head for Satan, Kit took his leave and he made his way direct to the home of Mrs. Bent.

He found the woman busy cleaning up after the funeral, and he told her what she was to do, but did not give her Harvey Wilbur's letter.

He needed that for another purpose.

"He wants you to write him word if you will have all ready for the young lady's coming, the preacher here waiting and just what your bill will be."

"I'm a poor hand wid de pen since I was afther hevin' rumatiz, an' you be ther one to write that same fer me an' I'll be a mither to yer."

Kit thanked her for the honor she wished to bestow, but told her he had to report at the office and would call for the letter in an hour.

So he left her sitting down to perform the task of writing a letter, while he went out to telephone the detective chief that he would call there soon, and it was most important to see him and please to have Officers Danvers and Keefe there also.

Then the young sleuth enjoyed a hearty meal, for he seemed well satisfied with the work he had done thus far.

Returning to Mrs. Bent, he found the woman folding up her letter, and she asked him to read it and "see if it was not afther bein' a gim."

It was a curiosity in its way, and a very labored letter, but it at least suited Kit's purpose, and that was all that was necessary.

Going to the secret service headquarters, he found the chief awaiting him, while Detectives Danvers and Keefe were in the adjoining room.

The letter of Harvey Wilbur to Mrs. Bent, his figuring out of the supposed messenger's time, the money given him by the kidnapper, and Mrs. Bent's familiar letter to him were all placed before the chief, who read them carefully, and said:

"Splendid! Kit, you have evidence here of their plot of deviltry, enough to send them to prison."

He touched the "buzzer" for Officers Keefe and Danvers, and upon their entrance, called out:

"See what this young sleuth has done? and he needs your aid in trapping several kidnappers to-morrow. Now, Kit, tell them what you have done, and let your plans be known."

Kit spoke of Harvey Wilbur and his plot to kidnap a young lady, force her into a marriage with him, and of his accomplices in Mrs. Bent and a man who had once been a preacher, but had gone to the bad.

"Now, a plan has been arranged that Harvey Wilbur," said the young sleuth, "should meet this young lady in Oakwoods Cemetery, and, if she did not get there within an hour, to go to my little home in Hyde Park, for this will give the chief and myself time to visit his rooms and learn more about him.

"Of course the young lady is not to be at either place, but you two officers will be at my cottage, for I will wait for you and let you in.

"Then, when Harvey Wilbur comes, you are to arrest him and hold him until night, when you are to take a carriage and drive him to the jail.

"This done, the chief and myself will join you here at headquarters and go with you to Mrs. Bent's.

"Is that the plan, sir?" asked Kit, turning to the chief.

"Just as we arranged it, Kit, but to you belongs the credit of it all, and I am sure there will be no hitch in carrying it out," was the answer, and the ferrets left for their homes, to meet the next day, the young sleuth spending a very lonesome night in his little cottage without Satan to keep him company.

## CHAPTER XX.

### KIT STRIKES IT RICH.

Officers Danvers and Keefe had arrived on time at the cottage, and Kit let them in and showed them his little home.

To Officer Dave Keefe he gave a disguise as an old woman, for he was to let Harvey Wilbur in and ask him to be comfortable, when Officer Danvers was to come in, and,

covering him with his revolver, was to arrest him.

Leaving the two officers in charge, Kit went to the home of Florence Crandall, again dressed as a messenger, but carrying with him a large dress-suit case, apparently well filled.

Miss Crandall saw him coming and met him in the quiet retreat on the piazza.

He handed her a letter that Harvey Wilbur had given to him for her that morning, and she read it with a sneer upon her handsome mouth.

It was full of protestations of his love for her, and begged that after meeting her, as appointed, she would drive with him to the house of a poor woman who was ill, and who was the mother of his clerk, for she needed sympathy from just such a sweet girl to cheer her up.

"Keep that letter, miss, for the chief will not use it, as it would fetch you into the trouble," said Kit.

Then he handed her, to read, Wilbur's letter to Mrs. Bent, her remarkable epistle in answer, and the report of his, Kit's, time to the supposed manager of the messenger boys.

Kit wished to let her have full proof of Wilbur's villainy and treachery to her.

Miss Crandall bit her lips and her eyes flashed, while she said aloud:

"Scoundrel!"

Then Kit departed for the office of Harvey Wilbur, for he had been told to come back and report, and having his trap set all ready to spring, he wanted to tell him he need not go to Oakwoods, but direct to the cottage in Hyde Park.

Dressed in his best, and with a slouch hat drawn well down over the plaster strips on his forehead, Harvey Wilbur was impatiently waiting Kit's return.

"There is nothing wrong?" he called out as Kit entered the office, silencing with a word Satan's greeting of him.

"All is lovely and the goose hangs high," joyously answered Kit, and he added:

"She's docked the cemetery meeting, and you are to go direct to the Hyde Park address."

"Good! But what have you in that case?"

"Some goody-goodies, jelly and fruit and

wine and a gown and other things for the poor sick lady you wrote her you wished her to go to see with you."

"The dear girl! she belongs to the Society of the King's Daughters, and is always doing good; but she will go with me, then, without trouble?"

"You bet your sweet life she will; but can I stay here with the dog until you get back, Mr. Wilbur?"

The man did not answer at first, then said:

"I shall not be back until late, for, after Miss Crandall has become Mrs. Wilbur—and she must marry me, and I'll see to it that she does—I shall drive her back to her home, for, when she is my wife, I can bring the old man and woman to terms."

"You did not give Mrs. Bent any hint as to who the young lady was?"

"No, siree; I knows when to keep my hash trap shut; but I told them at the office you would need me a couple of days, and I've got no place to go, so please let me stay here," and Kit added to himself:

"I'm getting to be a boss liar, I am, and Satan knows it and looks ashamed of me."

"I would like to, my boy, but I have dismissed my clerks and you cannot stay; but I'll give you some money to go to the theater and stay at a hotel, and you can come here to-morrow."

"Yes, sir," and Kit stood with his hand on the door as Harvey Wilbur closed up his rear office, and, leaving Satan in the front one, was ready to go to keep his most important engagement.

Kit wished to help him and closed the door after him, when the two walked to a livery stable and Harvey Wilbur took a carriage that was all ready awaiting him.

Kit watched him out of sight and then returned to the real estate office.

He had quietly fastened back the spring and the door opened readily, and Satan seemed overjoyed at his return.

Soon after a form was seen walking rapidly toward the office.

It was the detective chief.

"Well, Kit, as usual you have managed it well; I saw him go from the stable."

"Yes, sir; and no one is here, so we will get to work," and Kit took some skeleton

keys from his pocket, opened the rear door and went to one he had seen Harvey Wilbur enter when he went upstairs.

Up to the floor above they went, and Kit's first act was to take possession of Florence Crandall's photographs, and, opening the desk in the handsomely furnished room, he found her letters.

These, with the photographs, he put carefully away and looked about for any other article that might belong to the young lady.

He found nothing more, but he did find a bunch of strange keys.

Then the detective chief set about finding doors they would open.

A dumbwaiter in the lower hall was found, and it appeared to be a closet, which a key on the bunch opened.

This closet concealed back of the dumbwaiter a narrow flight of stairs leading to the cellar.

A lantern hung there, and lighting it, the two ferrets found themselves in a tunnel-like basement, with a door in the rear.

This a key was found to unlock, and Kit called Satan and sent him ahead.

It was a narrow corridor underground, and it led for over a hundred feet, where there was another door and a pair of narrow stairs.

At their head was a heavy door, covered with zinc.

It was opened and the chief and Kit entered a large hall, with a large skylight overhead and rooms opening upon it.

To these rooms there were iron doors, and looking out of the grating of three of them were human faces.

"My God! Chief, what does this mean?"

"Kit, you have struck it rich," cried the chief, and he was all excitement.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### THE KIDNAPPER KING.

They had found a private prison, and it was certainly within the walls and in the top of the large storehouse spoken of as being in the rear of Wilbur's real estate office, and upon the grounds.

But who were the three occupants of that strange prison?

One was a man well along in years, with a pale, haggard face.

A second was a young girl of nine, a frightened-faced child.

The third was a boy of thirteen.

One room door was open, and upon a bed, asleep, was a negro woman.

But she was not a prisoner, as the others certainly were.

The woman was aroused by Satan sniffing in her face.

She thought it was the real thing, the devil in reality, and she gave out one African yell that would have discounted an Indian brave.

But the chief soon had her fast, and, with teeth clinking together in fright, and her face of a greenish-gray look, she told her story.

One prisoner was a rich man who had been kidnapped by Harvey Wilbur and was being held to force him to pay an enormous ransom.

The little girl was another victim of the kidnapper, the daughter of wealthy parents, of whom a fortune was demanded.

The boy was also a kidnapped victim, held for ransom.

The negro woman was Wilbur's servant, the only one he kept, who was in his secret and under big pay.

Clerks he had but one, who was seldom kept in the office, but busy on outside work.

The three victims of this kidnapper king were released from their rooms and told that they should return to their homes as soon as night came on, and they were happy.

They had been given the best of food, good attention, books and other things to entertain them, but they were made to understand that they were worth a fortune to Harvey Wilbur.

Made to tell all she knew about her master, the kidnapper king, the negress said that she guessed he was crazy on the subject of kidnapping, and had gotten other victims there and forced money from them; for, as they were brought there drugged and taken away blindfolded, they never knew where they had been imprisoned.

The negress did the marketing and all went well, as Harvey Wilbur had some business and was never suspected as a kidnapper or a crook.

"He done fell in love with some gal, he

told me," she said, "and he say if he could make her marry him so he c'd git her money, then he w'd skip off wid his wife an' his fortin whar nobody ever c'd fin' him; but I guesses he won't go now."

"I guess not," dryly said the chief, while the young sleuth asked:

"Who was the lady he wanted to marry, auntie?"

"Dunno, chile, I dunno; for he don't tell much."

The chief explained to the three victims of Wilbur's love for gold that he would leave them there until night, free, but not to attempt to leave, while the negress was locked up, and he and Kit departed, returning the way they had come, Satan having been left on guard in the office.

"Now to headquarters, Kit, and I'll have officers ready to take charge of Wilbur's office and hidden prison as soon as I have had a talk with the superintendent of police and told him what my young sleuth has done, and more—that you have found the very three victims whom we knew had been kidnapped, but could find no trace of. It was these very people I wished to put you on to find what had become of them, and you have done it in one strike. Now about the raid on Mrs. Bent's?"

"Well, sir, in this dress-suit case I have a full girl's rig, and I will put it on and play the girl, going to Mrs. Bent's with Officer Keefe and Officer Danvers, as pretended friends of Wilbur's, and see just what the woman and her preacher friend will do."

"The very thing, Kit, for you'll make a very pretty girl."

Later the chief repeated the compliment with enthusiasm when he saw the young sleuth all dressed up as a girl, for he made a very handsome one and showed himself an artist in disguising himself.

Without a hitch Kit Keen's plot had worked to the end, for Harvey Wilbur had been captured by Officers Danvers and Keefe when he went to the cottage, and later the same two officers had gone with the young sleuth, disguised as a young girl, and Mrs. Bent and the preacher had shown the cloven hoof and been made prisoners, the woman's

home being discovered to have been long a secret meeting-place for crooks.

To jail the four went, for the negro woman kept them company, and to-day they are safe in the prison at Joliet, sentenced to the full limit, though they pleaded guilty and saved the city the cost of a trial.

How they had been run down they never knew, for the detective chief kept his young sleuth unknown, to have him serve him in other remarkable cases against the crooks of Chicago, and Kit still kept his little home and Satan as his pard.

The name of Florence Crandall had not been known in the affair, and Wilbur had wisely remained silent about her, thinking she was unknown as an intended victim, and thus saving further trouble for himself.

That she appreciated how she had been saved by the young ferret, her actions toward the brave young detective spoke louder than words could have done, for Kit received a deed one day, making him the owner of his cottage and two adjoining lots, and she had it put in good repair and most comfortably furnished, for she would allow no refusal to do as she wished.

To-day the young sleuth, unknown save to the secret service force, is winning fame by his deeds, and the detective chief calls him his "Right Bower."

THE END.

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